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ABSTRACT

This study examined the contingency behaviors, attitudinal dispositions, and personality traits of male caregivers in day care settings. A random sample of 20 male caregivers was contrasted with 20 female caregivers and 20 male engineers on measures of sex-typed attitudes and personality traits. Male and female caregivers were also contrasted on their sex-typed contingency behaviors as observed with the Fagot-Patterson Checklist. Results showed that all three groups maintained that boys should be masculine but felt that girls should be equally masculine and feminine in their behavior. Both male and female caregivers reinforced children significantly more for feminine behaviors than masculine behaviors and punished masculine behaviors more than feminine behaviors. Although the personalities of the male caregivers corresponded to the feminine direction of their female counterparts, they were not significantly more feminine than the male engineers. The female caregivers however, scored significantly more feminine in personality than the male engineers. It was concluded that the findings reported here did not confirm the flood of impressionistic reports in the educational literature which claim that males should be employed to counterbalance the "feminized" environment in early education. (JMB)

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Sex-Typed Attitudes, Sex-Typed Contingency Behaviors, And Personality Traits of Male Caregivers[1]

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[2] This study is based on a dissertation submitted to the Department of Child Development-Family Relations, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Ph.D.

Sex-Typed Attitudes, Sex-Typed Contingency Behaviors, And Personality Traits of Male Caregivers

Empirical research on the sex-role behaviors of male and female teachers in early education has resulted in two different trends. Results of studies employing female teachers and assessing their sex-typed contingency behaviors have been consistent. Female nursery school and day care teachers approved more of feminine behaviors in children (Etaugh & Hughes, 1975; Levitin & Chananie, 1972) and actually reinforced children for engaging in feminine behaviors instead of masculine behaviors (Etaugh, Collins, & Gerson, 1975; Fagot & Patterson, 1969; McCandless & Bush, 1975). On the other hand, when their sex-typed contingency behaviors were scrutinized, the males tended to administer more masculine contingencies when compared to their female counterparts (Etaugh et al., 1975; McCandless & Bush, 1975).

In view of these findings, educators have campaigned for the recruitment of more men in early education on the assumption that a strong male figure will circumvent the "feminized" environment of children (Burtt, 1965; Greenburg, 1977; Johnston, 1970; Kendall, 1972; Kyselka, 1966; Peltier, 1968; Sciarra, 1972; Triplett, 1968; Vairo, 1969; Williams, 1970). There is a major deficiency, however, in drawing this conclusion based on the few studies which exist. The major problem with previous research on sex-typed contingencies is that each of the studies thus far reported has employed male students who were part-time teachers as subjects. Consequently, some have argued that because these students had not actually adopted the role of caregiver or teacher as an occupation, they were not representative of those men employed in the field.

The present study was designed to circumvent this criticism by examining the caregiving behaviors of males who had chosen caregiving as an occupation. Two fundamental questions were of specific concern: (1) How do male caregivers

compare with female caregivers in similar settings? (2) Are male caregivers more feminine in attitudinal dispositions and personality traits than males in other occupational roles, namely those traditionally defined as masculine?

Method

Subjects

The original sample consisted of 25 employed male caregivers randomly selected from certified day care centers in the state of North Carolina. These men were caregivers of children between the ages of two and five. Five of the male caregivers withdrew from participation, leaving a remainder of 20 male caregivers in the final sample. The male-dominated field of engineering was contrasted to the traditionally "feminine" occupation of day care. From a pool of 75 names drawn from the State Board of Registration for Professional Engineers, 20 male engineers were matched to the male caregivers on age and education. A group of 20 female caregivers was matched with the male caregivers by day care center, age, and education.

Materials

Attitudes were measured by a checklist of 63 adjectives which were found to be sex typed for either males or females in a study by Williams and Bennett (1975). The Adjective Check List (ACL) (Gough, 1952) was employed to assess the self-perceived personality traits of the subjects. This checklist includes 300 behavioral adjectives from which the subjects selected those which were most self-descriptive. Nine of the 15 Need Scales on the ACL were employed to define masculine and feminine traits. Masculine personality traits were

operationalized by raw scores on the Achievement, Dominance, Endurance, and Autonomy scales. Feminine traits were defined by raw scores on the Abasement, Nurturance, Affiliation, Succorance, and Deference scales. A modification of The Fagot-Patterson Checklist (1969) was used to determine the sex-typed contingency behaviors of the male and female caregivers. The child behaviors used (Table 1)were derived from previous research in which significant sex differences in play preferences were observed using this scale (Etaugh et al., 1975; Fagot & Patterson, 1969; McCandless & Bush, 1975). The total number of reinforcers and punishers dispensed by the caregivers for sex-typed behaviors was assessed. Reinforcers were defined as favorable comments or joining in a child's activity. Punishers were operationalized as teacher criticism or initiating new behaviors.

Procedure

Four observational sessions were conducted to obtain observer reliability data. Two observers had to give exactly the same code number on each observation to be considered acceptable. The observations were judged completed when one of the two observers recorded a total of 127 observations on each of the two scales (i.e., child behaviors and teacher behaviors). The percentage of agreement on the number of observed events was computed by dividing the smaller number of observed events by the larger number of observed events on both scales. Percentage of agreement on the number of observed events totaled 98 %. The percentage of agreement on each scale was computed by dividing the number of events agreed upon by the total number of possible observations. The two observers were able to agree 90 % of the time on the child behaviors and 98 % of the time on the teacher consequences.

Once the mailed items, The Adjective Check List and the attitude check list, were returned by the caregivers, an event-sampling procedure was employed for data assessment using The Fagot-Patterson Checklist. The caregivers were observed in their day care centers until 12 contingency behaviors (i.e., reinforcers and punishers) were obtained for each. The code number for each child behavior and the corresponding code number for the teacher consequences were later combined into one of four categories: FR (reinforced for feminine behavior); FP (punished for feminine behavior); MR (reinforced for masculine behavior); MP (punished for masculine behavior).

Results and Discussion

The rate of return on the mailed items to 25 male caregivers was 80%. Although the return rates on mailed items from the female caregivers was 96%, only those items from females who corresponded to the day care center of the male caregivers were used. Of the 75 male engineers who were sampled, 59% responded by returning all of the mailed items.

The results of the study are best described in terms of sex-role attitudes towards boys and girls, contingency behaviors, and self-perceived personality traits. The results of a one-way analysis of variance showed that all three groups maintained significantly higher masculine attitudinal preferences for boys but felt that girls should be equally masculine and feminine (i.e., androgynous) in their behavior.

To measure contingency behaviors, use was made of a repeated measures analysis of variance with one between-subjects factor (i.e., sex of caregiver) and two repeated within-subjects factors (i.e., contingency behavior and sex type of behavior). Results in Tables 2 and 3 show an overall trend of more

reinforcers being administered for feminine behaviors than masculine behaviors and more punishers administered for masculine behaviors than feminine behaviors. This trend held true for both male and female caregiver groups. The reinforcing contingencies of the female caregivers were congruent with those reported in previous inquiries (Etaugh et al., 1975; Fagot & Patterson, 1969; McCandless & Bush, 1975) in which females in early education were more likely to structure feminine environments for children. The reinforcing contingencies of the employed male caregivers, furthermore, were also feminine in contrast to the masculine reinforcing contingencies of younger, male students observed in earlier studies (Etaugh et al., 1975; McCandless & Bush, 1975).

The similarity between the contingency behaviors of the male and female caregivers corroborated the works of Brophy and Laosa (1971). They reported no significant differences in sex-typed behaviors of children after having a male teacher and concluded that the presence of a male teacher was of minor significance.

The data shown in Table 4 reflect the results of the one-way analysis of variance on personality traits. Note that the overall personality traits, that is, the M-F Scores of the male caregivers were quite similar to those of the female caregivers. The personality traits of the three groups fell on a continuum with the female caregivers significantly most feminine, the male engineers significantly most masculine, and the male caregivers falling in between but approximating the scores of the female caregivers. The approximation, however, was not enough to be significantly more feminine than the masculine personality of the male engineers. It did seem, however, that this trend towards the cross-sex-typed personality may enable the male caregiver to more comfortably perform the task of caring for children. Analysis of variance

tests yielded significant differences on only three of the individual scales, each at the .05 level of confidence: Endurance, Achievement, and Succorance. The Newman-Keuls Test revealed that the male engineer scored higher on the Endurance scale than the male caregivers. The male engineers scored significantly higher than the the female caregivers on both Endurance and Achievement. Note that all the individual scale scores for the male and female caregivers were very similar. The locus of significance for the Succorance scale could not be determined by the Newman-Keuls Test.

In summary, the findings reported here did not confirm the flood of impressionistic reports in the educational literature which claim that males should be employed to counterbalance the "feminized" environment in early education. The data indicated that the male caregivers resembled the female caregivers in terms of sex-typed attitudes, sex-typed contingency behaviors, and personality traits. Attitudinally, both male and female caregivers reported they wanted boys to be masculine and girls to be androgynous. Their attitudes toward boys corresponded to the societal stereotypes, but their contingency behaviors did not. Both males and females reinforced all children for feminine behaviors. This contradiction between attitudes and actual behavior is not surprising since Mischel (1966), among others, has indicated that self-reports do not necessarily correspond with overt behavior. In regard to personality, the male caregivers closely resembled the female caregivers. This resemblance, however, was not considered enough to be any more feminine than the masculine personality of the male engineer.

Unlike men who traditionally choose their occupations for reasons of money, prestige, or power (Mason, Dressel, & Bain, 1959), 70% of the male caregivers in this study reported that they entered day care because of altruistic concerns or the nature of the job itself. In interviews the men

cited their love and enjoyment of working with children, appeal to the content of the day care program and curriculum, and desire to contribute something of value to this age group. It is not possible to determine whether the present findings suggest that there is something unique to males who enter the caregiving field or whether situational constraints induce their similarity to the female caregivers. This remains a question for future research.

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TABLE 1

SEX-TYPED BEHAVIORS BASED ON THE USE OF THE FAGOT-PATTERSON CHECKLIST IN PREVIOUS STUDIES

Masculine Behaviors	Feminine Behaviors
1. Play at cornmeal table or sandbox outside (1)	10. Paint (1, 3)
2. Build blocks, build structures, set up farms and villages (1, 2)	11. Artwork: cutting, pasting, drawing with crayons or chalk (1, 2)
3. Hammer, pound (3)	12. Play with clay, play-doh, or other malleable substances (1)
4. Play with transportation toys (e.g., toy trucks, planes, boats, trains, tractors) (1, 2, 3)	13. Play in kitchen, large playhouse, or extended kitchen activities; rehearse domestic activities (1)
5. Play with steering wheel, dashboards, or parts of car (1, 2, 3)	14. Play with dollhouse (1)
6. Climb or hide in covered structures (e.g., pipes, barrels) (1)	15. Play with dolls (1, 2)
7. Ride trikes, cars, horses, skates, wagons, boats, and other moving transportation toys (1)	16. Look at books or listen to stories (1, 3)
8. Throw objects (e.g., ball, rocks), hit with an object, push, shove; run around room (2)	17. Sit; do nothing, wander, follow teacher around (2)
9. Use like-sex tools (2)	18. Help teacher (3)
	19. Swing, slide, play on teeter-totter, or bounce on tires (2)
	20. Dress in like-sex costume (2)

[1]Derived from Fagot-Patterson (1969)
[2]Derived from McCandless & Bush (1975)
[3]Derived from Etaugh et al. (1975)

TABLE 2

MEAN SEX-TYPED CONTINGENCY BEHAVIORS BETWEEN

THE MALE AND FEMALE CAREGIVER GROUPS

	Male Caregivers			Female Caregivers		
	Feminine Behaviors	Masculine Behaviors	Mean Total	Feminine Behaviors	Masculine Behaviors	Mean Total
Reinforcers	5.00	2.90	3.95	4.50	4.35	4.43
Punishers	1.50	2.60	2.05	0.60	2.55	1.58
Mean Total	3.25	2.75		2.55	3.45	

TABLE 3

REPEATED MEASURES ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE SEX-TYPED CONTINGENCY BEHAVIORS OF MALE AND FEMALE CAREGIVERS

Source	ss	df	ms	F	P
Contingency Behaviors	225.625	1	225.625	28.356	<.001
Error	.33004	38	.86854		
Sex-Typed Behaviors	1.60	1	1.60	0.169	NS
Error	.33004	38	.86854		
Caregiver Sex X Contingency Behaviors	9.025	1	9.025	1.134	NS
Error	302.342	38	7.956		
Caregiver Sex X Sex-Typed Behaviors	19.60	1	19.60	2.064	NS
Error	360.797	38	9.495		
Contingency Behaviors X Sex-Typed Behaviors	70.225	1	70.225	6.847	<.05
Error	389.731	38	10.256		
Caregiver Sex X Contingency Behaviors X Sex-Typed Behaviors	3.025	1	3.025	0.295	NS
Error	389.731	38	10.256		

TABLE 4

MEAN SCORES OF PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF MALE CAREGIVERS, FEMALE CAREGIVERS, AND MALE ENGINEERS ON THE ADJECTIVE CHECK LIST

Subjects	Masculine Characteristics				Feminine Characteristics					M-F Score
	ACH	DOM	END	AUT	ABA	NUR	AFF	SUC	DEF	
Male Caregivers	10.25	9.65	8.40	0.85	-0.15	19.80	21.80	-0.70	3.70	-15.30
Female Caregivers	10.40	10.20	8.65	-0.10	1.00	20.95	22.95	-0.35	6.80	-22.20
Male Engineers	14.60	14.60	12.55	1.25	-2.00	19.85	22.40	-2.40	3.55	1.60